

MASKELL DOUBTFUL AS BLUES BID FOR CUP GLORY

GOALKEEPER John Maskell could miss tomorrow's (Saturday) vital F.A. Amateur Cup, third round tie when Wycombe Wanderers make their second journey up North in two weeks, where they face crack Northern League side, Blyth Spartans.

Maskell was injured at Evenwood in the last round of the cup when Wanderers triumphed 3-0. He went up for a corner and aggravated an old shoulder injury. John missed Saturday's 1-0 success over Kingstonian.

His place was taken by Kevin Raine and it could be that the former Hayes 'keeper will come in for his first cup game for the Blues tomorrow. Wycombe must have been heartened by his performance against Kingstonian, where his handling was immaculate.

GAME SWITCHED

Apart from the doubt over Maskell, Wanderers are free from any other injury worries. Derek Gambin is in contention for a return to the side having come on as substitute last week but it is more likely Wycombe will bring him back for a less important game, as Derek is not fully match fit.

Blues boss Brian Lee made the long trip to watch Blyth on Saturday. Originally their Northumberland Senior Cup match was to be played at

Marine Sports but as the latter's ground was unfit, the game was switched to Blyth, so Brian also had a chance to see the pitch and facilities.

He said there he had no complaints about the surface and described the set-up as "more to what we're used to."

One of the players to impress him during Blyth's 3-1 success was hat-trick hero Dagless. He put Blyth one up from the penalty spot at half time and added two further goals after the break. Centre forward Slain also looked good while Brian thought skipper Alder was the driving force in the team.

I asked him for a comparison between Evenwood Town, whom Wanderers beat 3-0 in the previous round. "As Bromley are to Hendon in the Rothmans Isthmian League, so Evenwood was to Blyth in the Northern," he said.

"They are obviously a good side to be top of the league and they will be motivated by playing a team from the South."

Blyth's record really speaks for itself. They are renowned cup fighters and this season is no exception. In the F.A. Cup they held Third Division Grimsby Town to a 1-1 draw at Grimsby (Slain scoring) before losing the replay at home. Their main strength lies in their experience. No less than nine of the team played against Enfield in the Amateur Cup semi-final of 1972 at Newcastle and they are now gleaming the full value of playing together for so long.

CUP MEDAL

One of their players, Micky Lister, has won a cup medal at Wembley when he played against Sutton for North Shields. Blues skipper Larry Pritchard was in the losing Sutton side.

Like Wanderers, Blyth have lost only three league matches this season. Early on, they raced to the top of the Northern League with 11 successive victories. That run was broken by

CUP PREVIEW



By **STUART EARP**

second placed Spennymoor who beat them 3-2.

In the same month they suffered their heaviest defeat this term, 3-0 at home to Tow Law in the League Cup. Tow Law seem something of a bogey to Spartans, for they also lost out 2-1 in the league. Willington are the other club to have beaten them, winning 2-0 at home in January. Evenwood and Blyth have not met this season so far.

Spartans' biggest win was a 7-0 thrashing of Gosforth in the Northumberland Cup while Crook were crushed 5-2 in the league.

CONFIDENT

Blyth's re-action to the draw was summed up by club chairman Jim Turney. "Its going to take a good team to beat us at home this season. We feel confident that we can reach the quarter finals for the third year running."

"We know it is in our favour that Wycombe have to make a

long trip for the second time in a fortnight, but we also know we have the toughest match of the draw facing us."

Blyth turned amateur ten years ago after being a semi-professional club. The first few years in the Northern League were bleak with their final position always being in the lower half of the table.

But in 1970-71 they hired Allan Jones as coach and soon guided the team to success. Jones is now national coach in Bermuda where he moved after an unhappy spell with Fourth Division Darlington, having left Spartans in the close-season of 1972.

His best season was Blyth was in 1971-72 when they reached the third round of the F.A. Cup, and the semi-finals of the Amateur Cup.

Last term in the Amateur Cup they defeated Marine, of Liverpool, in the first round and then were drawn against Hendon. They drew 1-1 at Croft Park, and then won the replay 1-0.

In the third round, Spartans beat fellow Northern Leaguers North Shields away from home by a single goal. But they lost out in the last eight 2-1 at Slough Town after a tempestuous encounter. Also last season they won the League championship, and were defeated finalists in the Northern Senior Cup. They also won the Northern League Cup.

This season they have eliminated Sutton Coldfield 3-0 and Fareham Town 2-0 (both at home).

CROWD SUCCESS

A large factor in Blyth's success has been their crowd at Croft Park. Amateur Cup games have regularly attracted well over 1,000 people, and 2,000 are expected on Saturday. The figure would have been more, had Newcastle not been playing at home. Four coaches are going from Wycombe, one less than the Evenwood trip. They leave at 11.30 p.m. on Friday night and arrive back at around 1 a.m. Sunday morning.

The Wycombe team and officials are again travelling by plane after the success of their last Northern trip to Evenwood. They depart from Heathrow at 9.10 a.m., and returning back from Newcastle airport at around 7.15 p.m.

Sutton United, who visit nearby Spennymoor United, will be on the same flight going up. A full report of the Blyth-Wycombe match will appear in Mid-week, out Tuesday afternoon.



KEVIN RAINE
... to keep place?

Route

WYCOMBE supporters making the long trip to Blyth tomorrow should take the following route:

Up A1, take Tyne tunnel road at Birkley in County Durham. Go through tunnel and follow signposts to Morpeth and Ashington. Proceed to round-about and take turning signposted Ashington and Blyth. Take turn-off to Blyth when signposted. Follow signposts into Blyth and when approaching town, travel across level crossing. Then take main fork to the right, immediately after going over another level crossing. Follow main road down and go over mini round-about. The Blyth ground — Croft Park — is situated on the left.

HOW THEY STAND

NORTHERN LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Blyth Sp.	24	19	2	3	58	20	46
Spennymr	25	18	4	3	59	29	41
Elghm	29	18	3	8	59	36	35
Tow Law	23	15	2	6	40	29	31
B Auck	24	12	7	5	41	22	27
Willgton	21	13	3	6	53	34	25
Ferry H.	24	11	4	9	32	21	21
Fenrith	26	10	3	12	40	47	21
N. Shields	21	10	4	7	38	28	21
Whitby	28	8	7	12	34	48	21
Everwood	23	8	5	10	38	42	21
Durfm C.	22	8	3	11	36	37	11
Consett	23	7	4	12	31	36	11
Whitby B.	21	7	3	11	25	26	11
W. Auck	25	5	7	14	30	61	11
Shildon	21	5	6	10	34	38	11
Ashington	17	5	9	9	25	29	11
Crook T.	24	4	4	16	28	59	11
Sth Bank	24	4	3	17	24	48	11
Stanley U.	19	3	4	12	22	35	11

ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE Division 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dulwich	31	16	11	4	50	24	59
Bishop	29	16	8	5	57	15	56
Wycombe	24	17	4	3	52	21	55
Hendon	23	15	0	2	41	10	53
Uxbridge	25	15	3	8	54	27	48
Hayes	25	14	6	5	52	27	48
L'atone	25	14	6	5	40	22	48
Oxford	30	11	12	7	32	34	43
Tooting	33	12	7	14	44	47	43
Ilford	29	11	8	10	38	34	41
Barking	30	10	6	14	40	45	38
Sutton	27	8	11	8	35	36	35
Kington	27	8	10	9	33	30	34
Barnet	28	7	9	14	30	38	33
Enfield	25	9	10	30	28	33	31
Walslow	30	8	9	12	32	46	33
Woking	30	8	6	16	32	42	31
Bromley	31	7	9	16	32	49	27
Clapton	30	4	2	24	17	101	14
St. Albans	29	2	4	23	22	71	10
Consals	26	2	2	22	17	66	8